

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00992 252301Z

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ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 VO-03 SCA-01 INSE-00 SR-02 ORM-03

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R 251546Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6188

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

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SECSTATE FOR VO, ORM, NEA/ARN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF, CVIS, IZ, LE, SY

SUBJECT: ASSYRIANS IN LEBANON (SENATOR JAVIT'S INTEREST)

REF: (A) STATE 013080

(B) BEIRUT 0928

(C) BEIRUT 0850

(D) STATE 014834

(E) BEIRUT 11649, OCTOBER 2, 1973

(F) BEIRUT OM, JANUARY 22, 1974

1. COMPLETE REPORT RE INS 203(A)7 REFUGEE PROGRAM AT
RESPONDS AIR POUCHED JANUARY 22 (REF F). THIS CABLE
RESPONDS REFERENCE A CONCERNING SENATOR JAVITS SPECIFIC
INTEREST IN ASSYRIANS IN LEBANON FROM IRAQ AND SYRIA.

2. ASSYRIANS FROM IRAQ AND THOSE FROM SYRIA MUST BE
CONSIDERED SEPARATELY, AS FORMER ARE ELIGIBLE FOR
203(A)7 REFUGEE PROGRAM WHILE LATTER ARE NOT. FOLLOWING
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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 00992 252301Z

INFORMATION INCLUDES OUR UNDERSTANDING OF INS POLICIES
AS IMPARTED DURING VISITS HERE BY INS/ATHENS REPRESENTATIVE.

HIS COMMENTS AND ADDITIONS ARE INVITED.

3. ASSYRIANS FROM SYRIA FORM SMALL PART OF LARGER MIGRATION PROBLEM HERE INVOLVING VARIOUS SYRIAN GROUPS, INCLUDING SYRIAN ORTHODOX, AMERICAN AND ASSYRIANS. MANY HAVE BEEN IN LEBANON FOR YEARS. ACCORDING UNHCR/BEIRUT REPRESENTATIVE, UP TO 100,000 SUCH SYRIANS IN LEBANON NOW, UP TO PERHAPS 250,000 OTHERS MAY HAVE BEEN HERE BUT RETURNED TO SYRIA. UNHCR AND EMBASSY DO NOT, REPEAT NOT, BELIEVE THAT SARG DISCRIMINATES AGAINST OR PERSECUTES CHRISTIAN MINORITIES AS GROUPS. MANY OF THESE PERSONS DO IN FACT OPPOSE PRESENT SARG REGIME AND LEFT SYRIA FOR THAT REASON. MOST CAME HERE SIMPLY TO SEEK ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE. ALL SYRIAN CITIZENS, INCLUDING CHRISTIANS, ENTITLED LEAVE SYRIA AND ENTER LEBANON ON IDENTITY CARDS, REMAIN IN LEBANON AS LONG AS DESIRED, AND RETURN FREELY TO SYRIA WITHOUT DANGER OR FEAR OF PENALTY PROVIDED THEY HAVE NOT INDULGED IN ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITY.

4. IN VIEW LACK GENERAL PERSECUTION AND SINCE TRAVEL BETWEEN COUNTRIES FREE, SYRIAN NATIONALS HAVE NEVER BEEN CONSIDERED REFUGEES ELIGIBLE UNDER 203(A)7. EVEN IF PERSECUTION EXISTED, GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF SYRIAN NATIONALS IN PROGRAM HERE WOULD BE COMPLETELY IMPRACTICAL IN VIEW HUGE NUMBER INVOLVED IN RELATION LIMITED NUMBER 203(A)7 VISA NUMBER AVAILABLE WORLDWIDE. OPERATION OF PROGRAM IN LEBANON WOULD BE POLITICALLY UNACCEPTABLE AS IT WOULD INVOLVE GRANTING WHOLESAL REFUGEE STATUS TO CITIZENS OF A NEIGHBORING "BROTHERLY" ARAB NATION. IN PAST, INS HAS MADE RARE EXCEPTIONS FOR SYRIAN NATIONALS IN LEBANON BUT ONLY INV CASES CLEAR CUT SEVERE INDIVIDUAL PERSECUTION.

5. ASSYRIANS FROM IRAQ HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED IN 203(A)7 PROGRAM HERE IN VIEW CLEARER INDICATIONS SOME OF THEIR NUMBER HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO PERSECUTION AND/OR DISCRIMINATION. AS REPORTED REFERENCE, LARGE BACKLOGS THIS GROUP HAVE DEVELOPED. CURRENT STATISTICS IRAQI ASSYRIAN 203(A)U APPLICANTS FOLLOW:
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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 00992 252301Z

- A. INDIVIDUALS SEEN AND APPROVED BY INS/ATHENS REPRESENTATIVE, BUT PENDING DEPARTURE: APPROXIMATELY 215.
- B. INDIVIDUALS NOT YET SEEN BY INS/ATHENS REPRESENTATIVE, BUT REGISTERED WITH VOLAGS AND ACCEPTED AS REFUGEES BY UNHCR/BEIRUT: APPROXIMATELY 300.
- C. OTHER INDIVIDUALS REGISTERED WITH VOLAGS, NOT YET SEEN BY UNHCR BUT LIKELY TO QUALIFY AS REFUGEES: APPROXIMATELY 240.

6. IN PAST,IRAQI ASSYRIANS HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY FREE TO TRAVEL TO AND FROM LEBANON. NEARLY ALL ARRIVE WITH VALID PASSPORTS. LEBANESE AUTHORITIES FAIRLY LIBERAL IN GRANTING EXTENSIONS OF STAY. IN RECENT WEEKS, HOWEVER, IN GRANTING EXTENSIONS LEBANESE AUTHORITIES HAVE MARKED PASSPORTS WITH WORD "MIGRATION". VOLAG PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH ASSYRIANS (WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES) HAS BEEN INFORMED BY SOURCE THEY CONSIDER RELIABLE THAT ASSYRIANS RETURNING TO IRAQ WITH SUCH NOTATION IN PASSPORT SUBJECT TO PROSECUTION, FINE OF IRAQI DINAR 300, SIX MONTHS IN PRISON ARE ARE FOREVER BANNED FROM TRAVLE OUTSIDE IRAQ.

7. THUS, IT WILL BE MORE AND MORE DIFFICULTS FOR ASSYRIANS TO RETURN TO IRAQ. THERE IS NO INDICATION, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WILL BE DEPORTED FROM LEBANON. GOL HAS TRADITIONALLY TAKEN TOLERANT VIEW OS SUCH MIGRANTS AND USUALLY SIMPLY "IGNORES" THIS EXISTENCE.

8. IN ADDITION TO NUMBER QUOTED PARAGRAPH 5, THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 1000 ADDITIONAL ASSYRIANS HERE WHO HAVE BEEN OR WILL REFUSED STATUS AS REFUGEES, EITHER BY UNHCR OR INS. (SEE REFERENCE F FOR DISCUSSION OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNHCR AND INS IN OPERATION REFUGEE PROGRAM HERE). THESE INDIVIDUALS CLEARLY EITH ECONOMIC REFUGEES OR LEFT IRAQ FOR REASONS OTHER THAN PERSECUTION. SITUATION REPORTED PARAGRAPH 6, HOWEVER, MAY CHANGE THIS SITUATION. ALTHOUGH LEFT IRAQ FOR REASON OTHER THAN PERSECUTION, NEW SITUATION MAY PUT THEM IN SITUATION QUALIFYING THEM AS REFUGEES. USINT/BAGHDAD AND INS/ATHENS COMMENTS
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PAGE 04 BEIRUT 00992 252301Z

REQUESTED.

9. THERE APPEARS LITTLE DOUBT THAT MANY IRAQI ASSYRIANS IN LEBANON, WHETHER NOW ELIGIBLE 203(A)7 PROGRAM OR NOT, ARE SUFFERING ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION AND SOME MAY BE FACING HUNGER. WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES/BEIRUT UNDERSTANDS ASSYRIAN GROUP IN UNITED STATES ARE ATTEMPTING ORGANIZE TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE INCLUDING FUNDS FOR ASSYRIANS IN LEBANON. MICHIGAN STATE SNTOR NIMROD APPARENTLY INTERESTED. WCC REMAINS CONCERNED OVER SITUATION, SINCE ASSYRIANS HERE, WHETHER 203(A)7 ELIGIBLE OR NOT, REMAIN PART THEIR CASELOAD.

10. INS/ATHENS REPRESENTATIVE HOPES ALLEVIATE SITUATION TO SOME EXTENT BY INCREASING SIZE OF PROGRAM IN BEIRUT. HE HAS RECOMMENDED INCREASE TOTAL 203(A)7 NUMBER AVAILABLE BEIRUT PROGRAM FROM 100 MONTHLY TO 200 MONTHLY, AND STATIONING INS OFFICER AND CLERK BEIRUT FOR DURATION IN-

CREATED PROGRAM. REFERENCE F SUGGESTS DEPT ENDORSE
INS/ATHENS RECOMMENDATIONS.
HOUGHTON

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